

Don McNea Fire School
www.FirePrep.com

Below are promotional interview preparation strategies that will increase your chances of being promoted. We strongly suggest you take the time to review these strategies before you take your examination. These strategies have been developed by experts in the field who have helped thousands of firefighters increase their score and gain their promotion!

At our website, www.FirePrep.com, under Fire Department Assessment Center Exam Preparation, we have in-depth Oral Interview and Assessment Center Exam Prep to put you in the top percentile over your competition and get that coveted officer badge - good luck!

ORAL ASSESSMENT DIMENSIONS –
JUDGMENT/DECISION-MAKING

- the ability to make sound decisions promptly on difficult problems
- the exercise of professional judgment and consideration of available information
- the willingness to make decisions that require the ability to remain self-possessed and “keep one’s cool” when making decisions under pressure
- individual has no difficulty utilizing resources and selecting the best strategy for accomplishing department goals
- individual considers alternatives and selects the appropriate solution
- responds well to difficult situations
- individual obtains information through a wide variety of methods
- individual anticipates hurdles to accomplishing goals and the mission of the department and acts proactively to identify alternative plans, actions and solutions
- ability to think resourcefully and remain calm when pressured by the time, situation or other personnel
- have adaptability in changing the order of actions in order to deal appropriately with ever-changing situations, people and personalities, and organizational stumbling blocks

ORAL ASSESSMENT DIMENSIONS - LEADERSHIP

- your ability to have others accept your ideas & goal structure
- your success in defining & solving problems
- your composure and maintenance of a positive attitude during deliberately-staged crisis situations
- your skill at risk-taking to either problem solve or initiate solutions
- ability to take charge
- ability to direct courses of action
- provide guidance to fellow firefighters in obtaining their personal goals and objectives
- demonstrates the ability to give direction, coordinate activities
- willing to commit self and take action
- solution oriented and willing to give what it takes to get the job done
- supports the goals and philosophies of the department
- supervisory oriented
- ability to direct and guide the efforts of others

ORAL INTERVIEW – NO ONE SHOULD LOOK BETTER THAN YOU!

APPEARANCE:

1. **No one should present themselves better than you!**
2. Clean shaven. No goatees, moustache neatly trimmed.
3. Uniforms vs civilian clothing
 - Make sure your uniform is not too tight – you don't want one of the buttons to fly off and hit one of the assessors!
 - Make sure your sport coat doesn't look like a used car salesman's
 - Wear the best suit or sport coat you own
 - If possible, wear a tie – make sure the colors match
 - If the choice is between a sport coat and your dress uniform, **we suggest you wear your dress uniform.**
 - Casual attire is not appropriate
4. Personal grooming
 - Hair cut, but not recently (a week old at least)
 - fingernails and hands must be clean
5. Wrinkled clothes – never!
6. “Shined shoes” seem like no big thing, but are noted by assessors as another “intangible” as you are walking in the room.
7. The old adage, “You only get one chance to make a good first impression,” is never more true and critical than in an oral interview. The assessors will begin to score you before you even open your mouth. Remember, charisma comes not from what is being said but what is seen.

PROMOTIONAL ORAL INTERVIEW - FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Many times you will be asked the question, complete your response, and then the assessors will follow up with a question. Below are some examples of different follow-up statements that could be asked:

- Can you provide us with more detail concerning...?
 - Can you elaborate on that point a little more?
 - Can you provide us a specific example of that?
 - What did you mean when you said...?
1. There are some occasions, though few, that during follow-up questions, the assessors will try to agitate you to see if you can control your emotions and keep a command presence while still giving an appropriate answer. Don't get caught in this trap. The assessors might raise their voices to you or try to make sarcastic remarks to you. For example, if you give an answer, one of the assessors might say to you, "So what, do you have a Superman cape under that suit that you are wearing? You really think you can do that?" That type of reply back to you will let the assessors see if you can be provoked into giving a sarcastic remark back instead of staying calm and standing by your position.
 2. Many times the assessors are simply trying to grab more information. Maybe you gave a partial answer and the assessors are trying to get the remainder of the answer from you. Make sure to pay attention if that's what they are trying to do. For example, they might say, "So those are your only suggestions for increasing training within the Division?"

PROMOTIONAL ORAL INTERVIEW - TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

Many times, this is the first question that is asked. This sets the stage. This is where the assessors get an idea of who you are, what your qualifications are, what you've done. This is truly that first impression.

This question requires specific, extensive preparation. Talking about yourself may sound easy, but too often candidates make the mistake of answering with a chronological life recitation, starting with where you were born, what grade school you went to, where you graduated from high school, what sports you played, where you live, your wife, your children, and ending when you got on the fire department. Unless you prepare for this question appropriately, this can be extremely boring for the assessors.

This is not a time to be humble. Go through your resume. If you haven't put a resume together, you need to do one that lists everything you've done in the department, projects you have been in charge of, leadership roles you've held, committees you've been on in the past or are currently on, your education (Associates Degree in Fire Technology, Bachelor's Degree, etc.), your certifications and licenses (Haz Mat, confined space, water rescue, etc.), and your community involvement (active in your church, feeding the poor, social concerns, volunteering at various organizations in your community, etc.). Your community involvement just needs to be 2 or 3 things – not a long list that will lose the attention of the assessors. The assessors want to know that you are not only a good officer and have prepared for this position, but you are also active in the community.

When you are practicing, consider organizing your answer into broad categories – education, relevant experience, accomplishments, recognitions and awards, community service – the order of which can be changed depending on the position you are interviewing for. Start by creating a list. Separate the list into categories. Then write a narrative that tells your story. Learn the narrative and practice it until you are comfortably able to recount it in about 5 minutes in your interview.

PROMOTIONAL QUESTIONS – DEALING WITH EMPLOYEE PROBLEMS

We have over 50 possible promotional oral exam questions on the topic “Dealing with Employee Problems” as well as over 200 questions on other topics in our Fire Promotional Oral Interview Exam Prep package. Here are a few for your review:

1. At roll call, one of your firefighters under your command has a wrinkled uniform, is wearing tennis shoes, his hair is not combed and he seems to be talking more than usual. You approach the firefighter and ask if he is all right this morning. As he replies back to you, you smell alcohol on his breath. You proceed to ask the firefighter if he has been drinking, and he states to you that he had a few drinks at a baseball game last night. He tells you that he is fine and it's not the first time he has been like this while you have been working with him. You state to him that this time you have some serious concerns about whether he can do his job today. He responds to you that he is fine and to quit bugging him. He tells you he will change his uniform, get in the proper shoes, and comb his hair. He then asks why you are getting on him so much today. How would you handle this situation?
2. One of the firefighters under your command has continually been late to work and has struck off numerous times in the past year. Their appearance is questionable, including times that you have told this firefighter to make sure that they are cleanly shaven. What are you going to do to alleviate the current situation and prevent it from occurring in the future?
3. As you are walking onto the apparatus floor, you hear one of the firefighters say, “I'm sick of you not helping out with the apparatus in the morning and just sitting around reading the paper and not doing anything around here. You need to start getting in the game, doing what needs to be done, or try getting a transfer to another station where they are slugs like you. We get things done around here.” The other firefighter replies, “Lay off me. I do my fair share around here. Quit getting on me all the time.” He then follows up with, “If you're man enough, why don't we take this outside and settle it?” How would you handle this situation?
4. You are at a multiple-alarm fire and you give a specific order to one of your senior firefighters to put a ladder to the roof of the building. The senior firefighter is questioning the safety aspect of this order. This is not the first time this firefighter has questioned one of your orders. What are you going to do about this so that it doesn't happen again and affect other members of your crew?
5. You have been recently assigned command of an engine company in a different district from your prior assignment. One of the firefighters under your command at the new unit tells you that she has a very sick child at home. What are you going to do to help this individual and how are you going to do it?
6. One of the firefighters under your command recently has been abusing sick time. Recently this individual reported for duty, was more talkative than normal, and smelled of alcohol. What are you going to do about this situation?

PROMOTIONAL QUESTIONS – NEW OFFICER

We have over 20 possible promotional oral exam questions on the topic “New Officer” as well as over 200 questions on other topics in our Fire Promotional Oral Interview Exam Prep package. Here are a few for your review:

1. Explain the characteristics of the best officer you ever worked for on this department. Now explain the characteristics of the worst.
2. What do you consider to be the biggest problem you will face when you become an officer in this department? What plans have you developed to solve this problem?
3. As a new officer, what technique would you use for solving problems?
4. As a new officer, what problems do you anticipate in delegating authority to your subordinates?